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BILL: House Bill 1413
TITLE: The Blueprint for Maryland's Future
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COMMITTEE: Ways and Means and Appropriations
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House Bill 1413 establishes principles of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future that are intended to transform Maryland's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system to the levels of high-performing systems around the world; establishing a Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program; extending by 1 year, to 2021, the requirement for the State to provide a supplemental grant to certain eligible county boards; establishing the Teacher Collaborative Grant Program; requiring certain performance evaluations of local school systems; etc.

PSSAM **supports** House Bill 1413.

On behalf of almost one million students, 1,400 school buildings, and 75,000 educators and other professionals who come under our responsibility, we sincerely thank members of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) for their tireless efforts to redefine Maryland's current educational policies and practices. Since 2016, the Kirwan Commission has been analyzing the best public schools and systems both nationally and internationally to provide recommendations for strengthening Maryland public schools in the 21st century. PSSAM is grateful that we had two superintendents who actively participated as members on this historic Commission. The final report of the Kirwan Commission, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, has called for an expansion of pre-K programs, increased teacher pay, more rigorous certification requirements for teachers (including pre-K teachers), and a series of other reforms and initiatives.

As local school superintendents, we will be charged as the education instructional leaders with implementing The Blueprint for Maryland's Future. PSSAM supported the policy recommendations as described in the January 2019 Interim Report. As such, we support House Bill 1413. For the past several years, PSSAM's top educational priority has been to support funding for the expansion of prekindergarten for all Maryland's 4-year-old children as well as early support and interventions for young children and their families. We are thankful that The Blueprint for Maryland's Future shines a laser focus on access to educational experiences and opportunities beginning in early childhood.

However, local school superintendents have concerns about the issue of accountability. We are held strictly accountable for student performance and growth by federal law under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The Maryland State Department of Education and the State Board of Education monitor, oversee, and enforce strong student accountability measures. We are also held accountable for fiscal financial management through multiple annual audits and routine, comprehensive legislative audits. If a school system is not in compliance with state fiscal requirements, the State Superintendent can withhold state funding. Accountability measures at the local level also include public and transparent policy and budget debates. We suggest that if a new accountability system is implemented, other current audits should be alleviated or combined to eliminate time consuming and complex tasks.

For the reasons above, PSSAM **supports** House Bill 1413 and urges a favorable committee report. We welcome the opportunity to work with legislative committees as they further discuss House Bill 1413.